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Committee on Housing and Land Management

Seventy-ninth session
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Item 2(a) of the provisional agenda
Review of the implementation of the programme of work 2018-2019
Review and follow-up to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other relevant agreements

Information on the development of the guidance document for the alignment of the activities of the Committee on Housing and Land Management with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other agreements

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The Committee at its seventy-eighth session in October 2017 requested the Bureau to prepare a comprehensive draft guidance document for the alignment of the activities of the Committee to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and other key agreements within its existing mandate.

This document provides with information on the progress with the development of the guidance document.

The Committee is invited to take note of the preparation of the Guidance document and to invite the Bureau to finalise the document and present it for the Committee's endorsement at its eightieth session in October 2019.

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I. Introduction and objectives of the document

1. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the adoption of the New Urban Agenda in 2016 and other key international agreements established new policy frameworks for future activities on sustainable housing and urban development at all levels. Above all, an integrated and coordinated approach at the global, regional, national, subnational and sub-regional levels, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, is required for meeting the commitments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and others.

2. The ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management is an intergovernmental body which works since 1947 to address shared housing and land management challenges across 56 member States in the ECE region. The Committee facilitates the dialogue between governments and supports knowledge transfer on innovative practices, gives advice and develops policy guidelines to address common housing, urban development, and land administration and management problems.

3. The Committee's objectives are

(a) Improving policy harmonization on housing, urban development, and land administration and management among government agencies in the ECE member States;

(b) Addressing major housing, urban development, and land administration and management challenges in the ECE region;

(c) Providing guidance for establishing more efficient legal and institutional frameworks for housing, urban development, and land administration and management, and

(d) Strengthening national and local capacity on affordable and adequate housing, smart and sustainable urban development and effective land administration and management.

4. The 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and other key policy documents together with the reform agenda by the Secretary General on the repositioning of the UN development system have direct implications for the future work of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management.

5. The Committee at its seventy-eighth session in October 2017 discussed strategic approaches and challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and other relevant global and regional agreements at national level. It was stressed the need for the governments and the UN system to re-focus their activities to ensure they effectively support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and address other relevant international commitments, through the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development in the ECE (March 2018) and the High-level Political Forum (July 2018).

6. Following the discussion, the Committee requested the Bureau to prepare a draft guidance document for the alignment of the activities of the Committee to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and other key agreements within its existing mandate. Preparation of the guidance document started in March 2018 by the secretariat under coordination of the Committee Bureau. It is expected that the first draft will be presented for discussion at the seventy ninth Committee session in October 2018. After the draft is discussed with the Committee and updated taking into account comments and proposals for revisions, it will be presented for the Committee's endorsement at its eightieth session which will take place in October 2019.

7. The objective of this document is:

(a) To provide the Committee with background information for the preparation of the guidance document and an overview of the key agreements which have implications for the Committee's future work at regional, national, subregional and local levels; and

(b) To inform the Committee on the preparation of the guidance document, including on its schedule and the approach.

II. Key global and regional agreements and their content related to urban development, housing and land administration and management

8. In the last few years, governments adopted at the global and regional level several milestone agreements that have direct implications to the work of this Committee. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1], the New Urban Agenda[2] along with other key global and regional agreements, including the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing which was endorsed by the Committee in 2014, highlight the need for policy reviews and refocus at the global, regional and national levels to ensure they are aligned with objectives and targets of these global agreements.

9. The United Nations initiated the process of integrating the aims of Agenda 2030 and other global agreements in its work at the global, regional and national levels. The United Nations Secretary General published his first report "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/124–E/2018/3) in June 2017 and the second report "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet" (A/72/684–E/2018/7) in December 2017. These reports marked the beginning of a change process of the UN development system to align its activities with the Agenda 2030 and other global agreements; to promote the organisation agility, higher effectiveness and efficiency. In May 2018, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 72/279 on "Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system" in which, among others, it reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and underlined the need to continue to make them fit for purpose in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A. UN global agreements

10. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The United Nations General Assembly adopted in September 2015 the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". It represents an ambitious, transformative global framework for sustainable social, economic and environmental development with the primary commitment of "not leaving anyone behind". Achieving the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals is highly dependent on the joint efforts by governments and stakeholders working at national, global, regional and local levels, including especially private sector, civil society and local communities. The 2030 Agenda stresses the importance of an integrated approach to addressing diverse challenges and the importance of cooperation between and within countries.

[1] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

[2] http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/

11. Sustainable urban development is the focus of SDG 11 – "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Work on achieving SDG 11 is crucial for implementing the 2030 Agenda since more than half of the planet's inhabitants live in cities and this continues to grow. Further, given the interconnectedness of the SDGs, most of them are directly relevant to the work of the Committee due to the integrated nature of housing and urban development challenges (see Annex 1).

12. New Urban Agenda (NUA)[3]: The Habitat III Conference in October 2016 was the first of the UN global conferences discussing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Conference approved the NUA, which embodies a major shift in UN policy as it emphasizes the direct link between urbanization and sustainable development. The NUA addresses principles for the planning, construction, development, management, and improvement of urban areas along its five main pillars of implementation: national urban policies, urban legislation and regulations, urban planning and design, local economy and municipal finance, and local implementation. The NUA directly links to SDG 11, it emphasises the important role of local authorities in achieving urban related goals and promotes territorial approach to the implementation. As part of the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the first of five quadrennial reports was produced in 2018, "Progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda: report of the Secretary-General"[4] (A/73/83-E/2018/62).

13. Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing Development[5]: The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted in July 2015 is a holistic and forward-looking framework that aims at further strengthening financing for sustainable development and the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

14. SENDAI framework for Disaster and Risk Reduction 2015-2030[6]: The Sendai Framework was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, on March 18, 2015 and strives to tackle the issue of disaster and risk reduction. Building on the Hyogo Framework for Action, the SENDAI framework focuses on improving livelihoods and health in all of its dimensions through "the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience". Effective disaster risk management contributes to sustainable development and tackles underlying disaster risk drivers, such as poverty and inequality, climate change and variability, unplanned and rapid urbanization and poor land management.

15. Paris Agreement on Climate Change[7]: The Paris Agreement was elaborated within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was adopted in December 2015 during the 21st Conference of the Parties. For the first time all nations undertook ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. As such, the Agreement charts a new course in the global climate effort. Ensuring that housing and cities are resilient to climate change and extreme weather conditions is critical for sustainable urban development.

[3] http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf
[4] https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1628008?ln=en
[5] http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf
[6] http://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf
[7] http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf

B. Regional documents and processes

16. It should be noted that the implementation of the global agreements at regional level is critical for success. At the regional level, the role of the UN Regional Economic Commissions is presented as a key element to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[8] (see paragraphs 82 of the New Urban Agenda[9], paragraphs 86 and 87 of the SG report, Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all[10], paragraphs 18 and 19 of the General Assembly on Repositioning the United Nations development system[11], article 87 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda[12], and article 12 of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030[13]).

17. The ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management serves as a central contact point for any country within the region that needs advice or information on sustainable housing, urban development, and land administration and management, as well as a neutral platform for the exchange of experience, knowledge and best practices.

18. Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing[14]: The Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing is a non-legally binding document that aims to support member States as they seek to ensure access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing for all. It was endorsed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on 16 April 2015. The Charter established an important thematic framework for the regional cooperation on housing in the ECE Region.

19. Following the endorsement of the Charter, the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management approved in in December 2016 a framework for the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing[15], including recommendations for the establishment of the Charter Centres for implementation of the Charter in ECE member States. The Centres perform activities such as an active dissemination of information on the Charter and its principles, advisory services, capacity building at all levels, networking with cities, regions and other stakeholders, etc. So far, two centres have been established in Estonia and Albania and several other countries reported during 2017 about their intentions to establish such centres.

20. Country Profiles and City Profiles assist governments to improve the performance of their housing, urban development and land management sectors. Capacity-building projects support urban planning especially in countries in transition through the cooperation between cities and national governments and the private sector, and further develop inter-sectoral collaboration among different departments of city governments.

21. The Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development[16] was adopted by the Ministers and the Heads of Delegation participating in the Ministerial Segment of the seventy-eighth session of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the Committee. The Ministerial Declaration reiterates the importance for governments at all

[8] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20/futurewewant
[9] http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/
[10] http://undocs.org/A/72/124
[11] http://undocs.org/a/res/72/279
[12] http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf
[13] http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf
[14] https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/Publications/UNECE_Charter_EN.pdf.
[15] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2016/ECE_HBP_2016_2.en.pdf
[16] Available in http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48305

levels and relevant stakeholders in the ECE region to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other relevant global and regional commitments. The Declaration underlines the importance of regularly monitoring and following up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other agreements.

22. Urban Agenda for the EU[17]: The European Union's 28 member countries adopted the Urban Agenda for the EU in May 2016. For the EU, urban development is a key issue: more than 70% of EU citizens live in cities where, at the same time, approximately 85% of the GDP of the EU is generated. The Urban Agenda for the EU is a way to enable cities in Europe to better influence related EU legislation, to focus funding instruments through different funds into cities and to share experience of urban authorities across Europe. The core of the Urban Agenda for the EU is development of partnerships in 12 thematic areas in total. These partnerships enable cities, countries, EU institutions and other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to work together on an equal basis and to look for and find common ways to improve urban areas in the EU. The partnerships were launched in the following areas: Integration of migrants and refugees, air quality, urban poverty, housing, circular economy, digital transformation, urban mobility, job opportunities and skills in local economy, adaptation to climate change, energy transformation, sustainable land use and solutions based on nature principles, and innovative and responsible public procurement. The partnerships generate an important knowledge base for the future work of the EU member countries to address urban development challenges.

III. Approach to the preparation of the guidance document

23. To implement the above mentioned global and regional commitments, policy changes at all relevant level need to be implemented in order to achieve the SDGs, objectives and targets related to other global and regional agreements. These policy changes will require **stronger horizontal and vertical cooperation** among governments and all relevant stakeholders, establishment of **partnerships**, strengthening **data driven and indicator based review process** and application of **innovative financial mechanisms** to support the implementation process. Given the need to implement this shift to the new way of developing and implementing policies, programmes, projects, **capacity building** and establishment of **effective platforms for international cooperation and exchange of best practices**.

(a) Firstly, there is a need in promoting an inclusive approach through **intersectoral cooperation at country and local level** and **diverse partnerships**. National and local governments, at all levels, as well as parliaments, civil society organizations, businesses and philanthropic organizations, the scientific and research community, academia, volunteer groups and other stakeholders — all have a part to play in implementing the 2030 Agenda and other global agreements;

(b) Secondly, there is a need to develop capacities for the data driven and indicator based review and follow up of the implementation of the global and regional agreements. The Sustainable Development Goal global indicators which will be applied at national as well as local level. Data collection remains a key challenge. Addressing this **gap in data collection** is crucial to better inform the measurement of progress, in particular for those targets which do not have clear numerical targets;

[17] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/pact-of-amsterdam.pdf

(c) Through the 2030 Agenda, member States should develop and implement a holistic approach to the SDGs, including through **innovative financing mechanisms**. Promoting innovative financing mechanisms will allow countries to better prevent and manage risks and develop mitigation plans. Demonstration projects will need to be developed to showcase such innovative mechanisms;

(d) Finally, there is a need in further building capacity of countries for data collection and for the development of national and global baselines of the implementation.

24. The guidance document will address the above generic principles in its analysis. The preparation of the guidance document is coordinated by the Committee secretariat in consultation with the Bureau and is led by Professor Brian Mark Evans, The Glasgow School of Art; and head of the UN Charter Centre on Sustainable Cities. The guidance is being prepared through a desk-based review of 'state of play' in ECE member states of aligning of countries activities with the 2030 Agenda and other agreements, organisation of a survey of member States and writing the study report. A background report and draft guidance document will be made available as information document ECE/HBP/2018/Inf.1 and will be presented to the Committee.

25. The guidance document will further describe a proposed approach for the alignment with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other documents through creation of more agile organisations at all level exploiting opportunities for cross-sectoral work.[18] In this context, this alignment should be understood as a dynamic process, where new opportunities can be explored and acted upon, while respecting existing mandates and within currently available resources, to better serve the demands of member States and the UN system. Opportunities will likely lie in new cross-sectoral activities, as the 2030 Agenda creates new possibilities for collaboration that reflect the linkages between different goals and targets. These activities would allow the organization to benefit from existing synergies, increase the efficiency of its work and have a multiplying effect on its actions to implement the SDGs. It is therefore necessary to nurture a cooperative culture with partners that facilitates undertaking cross-sectoral activities.

26. This strategic orientation builds on the experiences and achievements of cross-sectoral work in ECE, with already multiple instances of cooperation between subprogrammes, both formal and informal. At the ECE, the first step in translating this strategic orientation into practice is the identification of high-impact areas where multiple SDGs converge (SDG "nexus clusters"). The criteria used for the identification of these areas include: (1) Relevance of the areas proposed for the current and future challenges facing the ECE region, so that work on these areas contributes to serve existing or anticipated demands and make the organization future-proof; (2) Existence of core ECE expertise and products to address multifaceted issues in these areas by integrating activities under different subprogrammes and engaging into meaningful partnerships.

27. At the ECE, four possible high-impact areas have been singled out as a result of the ongoing reflection: (a) Sustainable use of natural resources; (b) Sustainable and smart cities; (c) Sustainable mobility and smart connectivity; (d) Measuring and monitoring SDGs (methodology). The value of these high-impact areas is multiple, as they can serve to: concentrate resources to address the multiple aspects of complex, multifaceted issues; facilitate partnerships, including with other organizations of the UN system; give potential access to new constituencies and promote a cross-sectoral dialogue with external clients; and provide more visibility to dispersed efforts under a common theme.

[18] This section is based on the ECE Executive Committee Informal document No. 2018/12 8

28. Nexus area "Smart and sustainable cities" SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities is one of the identified core SDGs for ECE. Many ECE subprogrammes are contributing to the implementation of targets under this SDG. In addition, SDG 11 has linkages with many other SDGs, including the other eight ECE core SDGs. The solution of many sustainable development challenges – in transport, energy, economic development, management of natural resources and many others – passes through finding and implementing appropriate solutions at the city level. The rate of urbanization is high in the ECE region and it is expected to continue to increase. In some parts of the region, where urbanization rates are comparatively low, faster growth can be expected. Cities are and will increasingly become a major focus for the delivery of SDGs. At this level, the linkages between SDGs often appear as particularly visible and the need for integrated solutions is strong. The high-impact area "Smart and sustainable cities" can group existing ECE activities under a common umbrella. This will provide a new narrative to integrate and communicate our work, while reaching out to new constituencies. It will also facilitate strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones.

29. Moving forward with the implementation of global agreements, a critical step for realizing the sustainable development goals and other goals under these recent international agreements, is an integrated and coordinated approach at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

30. The Committee is invited to take note of the preparation of the Guidance for the alignment of the Committee activities with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, The New Urban Agenda and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing; and to invite the secretariat to further develop the guidance and present it for the Committee's endorsement at its eightieth session in October 2019.